

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The amendment to claim 1 regarding added solvent is supported by, e.g., Claim 1 as originally filed, specification page 11, lines 10-15, page 12, lines 15-23, page 13, lines 3-9, the paragraph bridging pages 13-14, page 25, lines 6-16, and Figure 1. Other amendments to the original claims are formal in nature and are supported by the claims as originally filed. New Claims 37 and 38 are supported by original Claim 1 and by specification page 21, lines 16-18. No new matter has been entered.

Applicants greatly appreciate the indication of allowability for Claims 12-15 and 18.

The objection of Claims 3-5 for lack of antecedent basis has been addressed by the above amendment.

The rejection of the claim, as anticipated by, or in the alternative as obvious over, Nolley is traversed.

The present invention relates to a process for the conversion of heavy feedstocks through the combined use of three process units: HT, D and SDA, wherein a fraction of a stream containing asphaltenes coming from the SDA section, called a flushing stream herein, is sent to a treatment section with added solvent for the separation of the product into a solid fraction and a liquid fraction from which the solvent can be subsequently removed. As pointed out at specification page 21, and as detailed in new Claims 37 and 38, the solvent can be removed under subcritical or supercritical conditions in one or more steps, thus allowing for a further fractionation between deasphalted oil (DAO) and resins.

In rejecting the claims over Nolley, the position has been taken that section 30 therein corresponds to the presently claimed treatment section which receives Applicants' flushing stream. However, section 30 of Nolley is not a treatment section, but rather is a solvent flash zone used to separate the solvent contained in stream 29 coming from deasphalting tower 17. See, for example, column 10, lines 10ff of the reference. In the present invention, solvent is

added in the treatment section with the flushing stream. Looking again at column 10 of Nolley, there is no treatment of the asphaltene, but rather only a simple separation by flash to separate solvent added in the preceding dasphalting step.

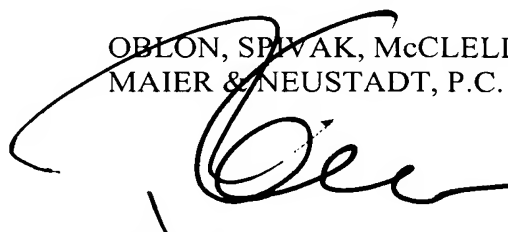
This removal of solvent in Nolley is to be contrasted with the present invention addition of solvent in the treatment of the stream containing asphaltenes. There thus is no deoiling, etc. disclosed or suggested in Nolley and for this reason the reference cannot anticipate or render obvious the pending claims.

Taylor, used alone or in combination with Nolley, Coleman and Yan, similarly fails to present a *prima facie* case against the pending claims. Specifically, Taylor, like Nolley, fails to add solvent in a treatment section with the flushing stream, and thus cannot and does not provide a process as presently claimed allowing for the separation of the product of the treatment section into a solid fraction and a liquid fraction from which the solvent can be removed. Nolley, Coleman and Yan similarly fail to disclose or suggest such a process, and thus cannot supply the critical missing elements necessary for the formation of a *prima facie* case. As such, the rejection should be withdrawn.

Accordingly, and in view of the above clarifying amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and the passage of this case to Issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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